



## **Blue Ridge Health District (BRHD) Recommendations for K-12 Schools and Daycares re: Quarantine & Isolation Guidelines**

**January 7, 2022**

### **Isolation and Quarantine Guidelines**

On Monday, December 27, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced a change to the [COVID-19 isolation and quarantine guidance](#). The Blue Ridge Health District (BRHD) encourages K-12 schools and daycares to continue with previous policies of 10-day isolation and quarantine periods. Our goal is to keep schools open and for students to learn in classrooms. Given the current national and local surge in COVID cases and potential challenges with implementing the new guidelines, BRHD believes 10-day isolation and quarantine periods are best for schools. In addition, the current surge in cases is expected to continue to increase through the end of January. Changing protocols now would only add to the potential for widespread transmission within school settings. Below we have outlined our latest BRHD recommendations and will reassess as more information becomes available.

### **Isolation**

Studies show and the [CDC acknowledges](#) that individuals who have tested positive can still be contagious up to 10 days after their symptoms started or they tested positive (for asymptomatic cases). This means that for up to 10 days, they can still infect others with the virus, even if their symptoms have improved or they had no symptoms. Thus, we believe it is best at this time for schools to operate with 10-day isolation protocols.

The new CDC guidelines would allow for students to return to in-person learning after 5 days of isolation as long as there is strict mask wearing during days 6-10. Implementing this practice in daycares and schools may present additional burdens on teachers and staff. Children attending school during days 6-10 may need alternate spaces to eat breakfast, snacks, and lunch in order to maintain proper distancing. Students who would normally participate in physical education, band, or chorus may not be able to engage in these activities if they cannot meet masking requirements. Separating children from activities during days 6-10 may inadvertently violate HIPAA privacy rules.

Additionally, we do not have the supply of antigen tests (nor has the CDC given us permission to use antigen tests) to help students “test out” of isolation.



### Quarantine

Students who are exposed to a positive case (whether that be at school or in the community) do not have to quarantine if they are fully vaccinated (two weeks after their second dose of a Pfizer vaccine). Students who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days also do not need to quarantine.

Students who are not vaccinated need to quarantine/stay home for a full 10 days before returning to school.

### **Parents/Guardians Reporting Positive Antigen Tests**

All schools should accept positive antigen test results and not advise parents/guardians to seek a confirmatory PCR test from a pediatrician or other testing provider. BRHD is asking schools and providers to report positive results so Case Investigators can conduct an investigation and track new cases in the District. Pediatricians will continue to see patients whose parents request a confirmatory PCR Test. Parents and guardians do not need to submit a note from a pediatrician to indicate children have ended their isolation or quarantine period.

BRHD continues to recommend that students who test positive with an at-home test kit isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms.

BRHD and local pediatricians will assess these recommendations in four weeks to determine if schools should continue this in February.

BRHD and local pediatricians still advise parents/guardians to seek PCR testing for asymptomatic children who receive a negative test result from their at-home rapid antigen test.

**Please note:** BRHD meets weekly with local K-12 public, private, and independent school leaders. We will continue to routinely monitor and provide the latest data, research, and any guideline changes. We will reassess as more information becomes available and provide timely updates with schools and community members.